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RELIGION AND THE TIME-PROCESS.

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THROUGHOUT the long series of changes of fashion in categories, which it is the business of the historian of philosophic and theological opinion to record, it is significant that the category which gives its very form and constitution to all human consciousness, as we know it here, is perhaps the one which has been most universally and consistently out of vogue, in the religious formulation of the meaning of life, of the nature of the good, and of the attributes of the supreme reality.

The concept of time, of becoming, of process as such, is one with which all reflective religious thought, no less than merely speculative metaphysics, has had the greatest difficulty in dealing. It has seemed impossible to assign any worth or any really rational meaning to the fact that this world exists under the form of time ; that it is a scene where

“Man is hurled
From change to change unceasingly ;”

that the human will is ever compelled to reach out after a future good not yet realized, and the human intelligence to apprehend truth through a successive and discursive process, beyond the utmost achievements of which lies ever the unapprehended truth of the future. And most of the subtler theologies, both oriental and occidental, agreeing in few things, have agreed in declaring that in so far as this world is temporal and changeful it is no fit object for the enlightened will to fix itself upon, and that process, becoming, outreach toward the unrealized, can be no factor in the mode of existence enjoyed by the most perfect and real Being, nor in that contemplation of, or participation in, the divine perfection, which religion sets before men as the supreme good and true end of desire. The historical vicissitudes of the relation between religious thought and the time-notion this article proposes to set forth, with some of the psychological reasons for

those vicissitudes; and it will urge in the outcome that the religious reflection of the future will be obliged to assign, in its theology and in its theory of worth, a place and value to the idea of becoming which will be very different from that assigned to it by almost all the religious reflection of the past.

I.

The reasons why religion has so generally taken such an antipathetic attitude toward the conception of temporal change are not hard to see. The great interest of religion is, first, to define the *summum bonum*, to hold out to men the vision of such a truly final and adequate and self-justifying end to aspire to as shall be lastingly capable of controlling the will by dominating the moral imagination; and its second—and essentially secondary—interest is to define the *ens realissimum* in such a way that it shall appear either as a perfect type or expression of the particular sort of good which the particular religion sets before its followers, or as a means and assistance toward the attainment of that good, or as both. In their views, both about this end and about this reality, almost all the great historic world-religions have been more or less completely and consistently “otherworldly.” By the true otherworldliness I mean, not a preoccupation about a future life which may or may not be different in kind from the present life, but a disposition to define both ultimate Being and genuine Worth in terms of their “otherness” to the characteristics of the common experience of the life in time and place. The logical procedure by which religious thought has most commonly reached its conception of the good has consisted in analyzing the aspects of experience which seem to be inherently implicated in its irrationality and evil, and then in making the good lie in the negation of those aspects, while at the same time giving a very positive value to that negation. And, in proportion to the depth of the moral experience and the profundity of the reflective insight of the religious thinker, this *contemptus mundi* has, in the history of religion, more and more attached itself—not, as for the unreflective and naïve religious consciousness, to the mere accidents and superficial details of

the terrestrial life—but to the very logical conditions and constitutive framework of that life. And no aspect of experience has so generally seemed to require to be negated in the definition, either of the one true good or the one true entity, as has temporality and change. Why such a view was not only a natural but an inevitable stage in religious thought may most clearly be seen by analyzing the motives which determine the character of the great religious philosophies of India—specifically of the Vedanta and of Buddhism. Two considerations led these schools to their condemnation of the time-process. The first is the outcome of a peculiar cosmological preconception of Hindu thought, as a result of which the world-process as a whole appears inherently to lack any rational significance, any genuine finality. This preconception is, of course, the belief in world-cycles; but the root of the belief in world-cycles is the assumption of the literal infinity of the series of temporal changes, in both directions. Any end which is to appeal to the will must be capable of seeming interesting; but the idea of the infinity of the world *a parte ante* as well as *a parte post* means the death of interest and the destruction of significance in any series of changes. For, so contemplated, the world-process not only can have no literal end, but it cannot even be conceived to have any movement or direction toward an end. Having begun nowhere, it leads nowhither; and the mind, if it is to give to this unachieving sequence any rational order and form at all, can do so only by imagining it as a circular process, ever returning upon itself to repeat the selfsame round throughout the endlessness of time. To the Hindu, therefore, existence appears, not as a stream moving by a definite course through a various landscape, but as a boundless ocean of little waves that rise and fall and rise again in a senseless and barren iteration. One age differs neither for better nor worse by reason of the ages that went before it. In the Buddhist cosmical myth even the religion of Gotama accomplishes no continuous and progressive salvation of the world, but only a periodically repeated salvation of a few out of the world; and what is certain is that even the Wheel of the Law itself will eventually cease to turn, and will require the

intervention of new Buddhas—new, but in attributes and doctrine ever the same—to start it again, and yet again, upon its identical course. The will, under such a preconception of the futility and wearying repetitiousness of the world-process, finds itself in the presence only of a vague and troubled immensity, in which there is no significant end, no cumulative movement, to which it can attach itself. The only good, then, seems to consist in turning away from the world of time, and, by rigorously stripping the mind of all its natural attachments to temporal things, to bring it into participation in the unbroken unity of the universal Atman or the timeless peace of Nirvāna.

The second motive for the elimination of the time-notion from the conception of religious good gets its clearest and most forcible expression in the psychological doctrine of Buddhism; and this motive depends upon no external cosmological presupposition, but upon the observation of the intrinsic nature of the relation between time and human volition. The fundamental principle of the whole religious teaching of the Pāli *Pitakas* is that time is the root of all evil. In the formula of the "Three Characteristics," which sums up the grounds for Buddhism's pessimistic attitude toward the life of natural experience, the first characteristic is *aniccam*, "change" or "impermanence;" and the other two, as plenty of passages in the *Pitakas* make clear, are only deductions from the first. The "misery" of the world, and its "lack of substantive reality," are necessary consequences of the fact that it is, in its inmost nature, nothing but a process of endless becoming (*bhava*). The reasons why change involves misery are what the Buddhistic psychological analyses, as contained especially in the "Formula of Dependent Origination," are designed to make clear.¹ The will—if I may briefly summarize in modern terms what I think is unmistakably the determining insight of Buddhism—is simply a tendency to reach out after satisfaction; and the attainment of satisfaction would mean the cessation of outreach, since the one conception

¹ For an attempt to elucidate in detail this analysis, see the writer's paper, "On the Buddhistic Technical Terms *upādāna* and *upādisesa*," in *Journal of the Amer. Or. Soc.*, Vol. XVIII.

implies the negation of the other. But so long as the will fixes itself upon any objects that can arise or alter or perish in time, so long it is sure to find only an endlessly renewed dissatisfaction. For, under the law of constant change, the object, once possessed, will not remain the same. And, on the other hand, the will, too, cannot remain the same; as the tide of desire ever shifts and fluctuates, the object once yearned after, when attained, soon becomes a source of *ennui*. The will in time is constitutionally incapable of doing aught but grasp after the unpossessed, after the supposed good which lies just beyond; in the temporal life "man never is, but always to be, blessed." In short, then, existence under the form of time, and the attainment of the good, constitute two mutually contradictory ideas. Salvation, therefore, can, in the nature of the case, be gained by no other process than by suppressing all volitional forthreach, by abstracting the will from the temporal order. The Buddhist ethics sets forth the methods of spiritual discipline through the persistent exercise of which this supreme good may gradually be reached.

It is, however, more pertinent to the purposes of this paper to recall the forms which the religious and metaphysical negation of the time-process has taken in the thought of the Occident. To a degree hardly yet adequately recognized, the sources, not only of the formulated theology of the ancient and mediæval and much of the modern world, but also of the form and logical outlines of the average and untechnical religious thought, are to be found contained whole and entire in Platonism. It was Platonism that first laid down the principle, which was to become the universal assumption of the theology of the Christian church, that the absolutely real Being is identical with the supreme perfection, the *ens* with the *bonum*; it was Platonism also which first clearly conceived the religious life in the way that it was thereafter to be conceived by all the more reflective piety of Christianity, as consisting essentially in the *διμολωσίς τῷ Θεῷ*, in the *imitatio dei*. And, what is most important of all, it was in Platonism that those formal preconceptions which were to determine for many centuries all the more philosophical views

about the divine nature and the nature of the good, got their earliest and most influential manifestation. The Platonic view of the world, if one leave out of account the secondary and inconsistent features of it expressed in the myths, was the strictly logical issue of a consenting twofold dialectic, of which the one side turned upon ontological categories, the other upon the categories of worth; both led to the inevitable conclusion that both the good and the real, which are one and the same in God, are essentially free from all change and movement and activity, are completely alien to all temporal becoming. The ontological side of this reasoning was, of course, simply a repetition of the old dialectical principle of the Eleatics, that, since only being is, "becoming" cannot, in a rational sense, be esteemed real; the other side of the argument—the side of which the precise character and importance is less commonly recognized—was rather Socratic in its origin, a development from the teaching and example of that singular genius from whom all the most distinctive currents of ancient thought descend. At bottom, the logical essence of the conception here is closely related to the thought which we have seen to be fundamental in Buddhistic pessimism; but the form of it is, of course, very different. God is to be defined by Plato as "the Good;" but what is the significance, the distinctive generic mark, of the concept "good"? The answer to this question was the one feature common to all the Socratic schools. The good, it appeared, must be defined by its relation to the will, and must be the opposite of that state of the will to which a desired end is absent. In a word, the good seemed to mean self-sufficiency (*αὐτάρκεια*); as Plato says in the *Philebus*: "The good differs from all other things that are in that the being who possesses it has the most perfect sufficiency and is never in need of anything else." The concept was thus defined by most of the disciples of Socrates, not in terms of any specified concrete content, but in its purely formal essence, and chiefly as the negation of that one, empirically well-known, generic characteristic of the not-good—namely, insufficiency or dissatisfaction. So understood, the idea of perfection, when carried up into the

absolute, proved to have the same metaphysical implications as the Eleatic idea of being; the perfect must be one, simple, ontologically independent of external relations to other entities, and, above all, free from all mutability, from all activity or outreach-ing of volition. If God was the perfect good, then he must be a perfected and static good, free from all participation with, or entanglement in, this moving, striving world of particular and imperfect beings. Such was the "perfectionist theory of worth," as I may call it, which in various modifications was to control the metaphysics, the theology, and the ethics of many succeeding centuries, pagan and Christian. With Plato himself, the logic of this formal perfectionism is dominant, not only on the religious side of his thought, but equally in his politics and in his theory of education. The one criterion of value which he applies alike to the character of an individual and to the constitution of a state is that of formal unity, simplicity, and changelessness, always at the expense of diversity of content and progressive movement. The good man is the man of a single, self-contained, unaltering temper of mind, who never for a moment, even in jest or for dramatic or poetical purposes, allows himself to depart from that stern uniformity of mood; and to such a pitch will he carry his self-sufficiency that he will make no great lament over the death of his friends, "since such a man contains within himself in the highest degree whatever is necessary for a happy life, and is distinguished from the rest of the world by his peculiar independence of anything other than himself." So, too, the state must not be allowed to grow beyond the point which is consistent with internal unity; and its constitution, once fixed upon a philosophical basis, must never be changed or amended.

In all the post-Socratic schools of thought—even in those whose metaphysics and cosmology are most remote from Plato's—it is possible to trace the working of this dialectic of the concept of abstract perfection. It is to be seen in Aristippus's idea of a *μονόχρονος ἡδονή*—of a succession of moments each in itself perfect and free from outreach toward the future, although unfortunately destined to pass away in the future and be superseded

by other moments. It is to be seen, obviously enough, in the Epicurean ideal of ataraxy. The generalization is demonstrably accurate that the ethical attitude, the practical theory of value of all the profounder thinkers of ancient philosophy, was ruled by a more or less constant conviction that mere diversity, richness of content as such, especially in the form of change and temporal process, absolutely is not, to the wise man, valuable or interesting in itself, but only as rationalized into a formal unity and immutability; and such rationalization in each case—though in each case differently—implied some sort of simplification, abstraction from the actual or potential richness of experience, arrest of the discursive movement of the understanding and of the will. In the intellectual life this meant a lack of interest in the mere inductive accumulation of details *qua* details; in the moral life it meant a withdrawal from the external, a circumscribing of emotion and sympathy and activity within the limits in which it was possible to maintain the self-sufficiency and unchanging oneness of the inner life. Not even in those instances where the motives tending to counteract this are strongest—in Aristotle, for example, and in Stoicism, with its nominal apotheosis of the principle of motion, and its conception of virtue as a sort of tension—can a penetrating criticism fail to find that this “perfectionist” presupposition is the most persistently influential motive. Aristotle's theology, indeed, gives the clearest expression that is to be found in the classical period of Greek thought of what the presupposition in question leads to. The Aristotelian deity, pure form without determinate content, desiring nothing, doing nothing, eternally engaged in contemplating the emptiness of his own simplicity, maintaining his perfection only through his transcendent ignorance of, and indifference to, the struggling world of imperfect entelechies—such a conception is the adequate and consistent product of the underlying logic of the classical theory of worth. The affinity of this conception with such an oriental one as that of the Vedanta is obvious, and some recent critics have consequently been led to hold that Aristotle, as a result of the Asiatic expedition of Alexander, had come under the influence of eastern speculation. But such a

theory is entirely gratuitous, and can arise only from a failure to see how the Platonic dialectic, turning upon the concept of abstract self-sufficiency, had such a theology as Aristotle's for its necessary outcome. Even to account for the degree of mysticism and otherworldliness reached much later in Neoplatonism, it is not necessary to invoke oriental influences. It has become the fashion very greatly to overstate the remoteness of the Platonism of Plotinus from the Platonism of Plato. In truth, the logical methods and the determinative presuppositions which produced the former were derived wholly from the latter. The Neoplatonic absolute is really a no more mystical, "otherworldly," and "superessential" entity than is the Idea of Perfection of Plato or the God of Aristotle. There was very certainly a deeper mysticism in the actual tone of the religious feeling of the Neoplatonists, and this led them to dilate with greater rhetorical exuberance upon the mystical and paradoxical aspects of their conception of deity; but if we consider, not the temperaments of the philosophers, but the logical import of their ideas, we shall see in the systems of Plotinus and Proclus (except for their emanationism) the legitimate issue of the most characteristic preconceptions of Greek thought.

It is impossible within the limits of this article to attempt to analyze the implications of the primitive teachings of Christianity concerning the meaning and worth of the time-process, and the general question of otherworldliness. That is a large and rather difficult problem that would require separate treatment. But if we turn to the developed forms of historic Christianity, after it had left its original Semitic environment and had adjusted itself to the religious and philosophical traditions of European thought, we find dominant the same theory of the good, with its negation of the temporal. There were certainly some things in that part of its doctrine which the church owed to its Jewish origin that worked against this tendency. We have seen that there were two reflective grounds for the denial of the worth and reality of process in time; one was the belief that the external cosmical process as a whole could have no significant purpose or finality; the other was the belief that the attainment of the good

meant the termination of volitional movement. The former of these beliefs, latent in most Greek thought as well as explicit in oriental, could hardly be admitted by the Christian theologian. Christianity has always, no doubt, been nearest to its true and original type when it has been most faithful to the spirit of Jewish prophetism, to that essentially Hebrew habit of mind which consists in looking upon the history of the world as a continuous and significant drama, having a beginning, a middle, and an end, and an increasing purpose running through the whole. And a characteristic phenomenon which marks the early phases of the conjunction of Judeo-Christian and Hellenic ideas is the first appearance of the philosophy of history. In the theology of Origen this wholly novel sort of intellectual interest manifests itself in a striking way. The notion of the possibility of such a thing as a comprehensive philosophy of history must be considered to be a peculiarly Christian contribution to the Occident's stock of general ideas. Such an idea, once introduced, necessarily made historic changes, the temporal sequence of events, the temporal activities of men, appear meaningful, and therefore interesting, as they had never appeared before. And Christian theology has never been able wholly to rid itself of this view of the world-process. But it has usually made the view of little practical effect or religious value, by conceiving of the goal toward which the world-process was supposed to move, as the consequence of a cataclysm produced chiefly by powers from without, not as the gradual and consecutive outcome of the time that now is, and of the continuous efforts of human wills therein. In Catholicism and Protestantism alike, religious philosophy of history has tended to degenerate into chiliasm; and chiliasm has always meant, not a lessening, but an intensification of practical otherworldliness.

In any case, the second and more profound of the motives which had elsewhere led to the exclusion of "becoming," and therefore of volition, from the idea of God and of the good, was fully present in the theology of the church; the Neoplatonic and the Aristotelian influences which between them gave shape to mediæval thought necessarily insured this. The same argu-

ments whereby the perfection of the deity was shown to involve his simplicity and immutability were repeated again and again by heterodox mystic and orthodox schoolman; the same ideal of human blessedness as consisting in detachment from the temporal and the diverse, and the fixation of the mind upon the changeless, the indivisible, and the eternal, was put in practice anew, with all the help and convenience in doing so which came from elaborate organization. The church, to be sure, was fertile in compromises and concessions on these matters. On the theoretical side, she was confronted by the difficulty, which had already confronted Plotinus, of making it intelligible how a non-temporal God could be conceived to create and rule a temporal world, and how the simplicity and perfection of God were consistent with the existence of a divided and imperfect world. Her whole ontology, therefore, was a compromise between the Jewish conception of God as Creator of a real universe which is the field wherein take place the moral struggles of independent agents, and the conception of the thoroughgoing mystic who declares that only the One and Eternal is, and that the temporal world is sheer nonentity and illusion. On the practical side was the analogous difficulty of reconciling the moral teaching which made man's greatest virtue to require celibacy, withdrawal from the world, abstention from terrestrial ambitions, with the purposes of a church which felt itself called upon to dominate the world and ever enlarge its own borders. Here, too, therefore, were compromises, adjusted with supreme skill; the church had its well-defined system of "natural virtues," its scheme of terrestrial values, with which the greater part of mankind was expected to content itself. An ethical inconsistency still more significant found a place, the inevitable inconsistency which is to be found in the actual practice of every mystic or moralist whose theory of worth is an abstract ideal of individual perfection. The holder of such a doctrine is always obliged to retreat from his professed faith that formal perfection and quietude of will are the sufficient good, by practically admitting that still better than the actual enjoyment of such a good is the activity of preaching it. It was this happy incon-

sistency which made the released cave-dweller, in Plato's myth, turn away from beholding the sun and the fair landscape of the Ideas, and go back into the gloom of the cavern to tell his former fellow-prisoners of his vision. It was the same inconsistency which allowed Gotama under the Bo-tree, when Nirvāna—that is, according to his own doctrine, the only and the sufficient good—was within his reach, to turn away from it, and devote himself for fifty years to the very earthly and temporal business of preaching the new way of salvation, and of founding and organizing an order. The mediæval church similarly was obliged, not only to permit, but to encourage this inconsistency. As Thomas Aquinas taught:

Of its kind the contemplative life is of greater merit than the active. But it may happen that one individual merits more through the works of the active life than another through the works of the contemplative, if, with an abounding love for God, to the end that God's will may be fulfilled and for his glory, one endures to be separated from the sweetness of divine contemplation for a season.²

The result of this concession was one of the interesting historical paradoxes of the Middle Ages—the number of great mystics who, called by the church or the state from their cloisters, proved themselves supremely capable men of affairs; using the self-discipline which had been the peculiar gain of their otherworldliness as an instrument in the furtherance of this world's work. But, in spite of all these compromises, there could be no doubt that *Weltflucht* and the attainment of a changeless quietude of will were the moral ideals which the church held out to those who would really follow its counsels of perfection; and there could be no doubt that the logically more fundamental element in the church's idea of the divine nature was to be found, not in the "positive," but in the "negative theology;" not in the conception of God as moving and achieving ends in time, but in the conception of the *Deus omnino immutabilis*.

The Protestantism of the past has seldom had such a definite philosophy as this behind its theology and its conception of the Supreme Good. Philosophic profundity and dialectical thoroughness have never been the characteristic virtues of Protestant

² *Summa*, II, 2, q. 182, art. 2.

thought; and, under the circumstances, could not have been. Even more conspicuously than Catholic dogma, the traditional body of Protestant conceptions has been a compromise, a transitional *Vermittelungstheologie*, historically justifiable as a means of passing gradually and normally from the mediæval to the modern *Weltanschauung*. Just as the historic Protestant theory of the sources of religious knowledge has been an unstable compromise between rationalism and authoritarianism, so likewise have Protestantism's theory of worth and its general view of the meaning of temporal process been equivocal and shifting. Yet here, too, the dominant (though the steadily weakening) tendency has been toward the otherworldly mode of conceiving these matters. As regards the method of religious knowledge, Protestantism has gone beyond the mediæval church, in holding that the flow of time and the movement of history are wholly meaningless and irrelevant; up to the first Christian century, religious truth was accumulated progressively, but since that time it has become a stationary "deposit," to be continually reappropriated by succeeding generations, but in no wise to be enlarged or corrected by man's expanding knowledge and increasing experience. In this respect, then, the fact that the human race lives under the form of temporal progression has been a fact of no religious import. As regards the conception of God, popular Protestant belief has happily and unreflectively thought of the divine nature in temporal and anthropomorphic terms, although a vein of mysticism has now and again made its appearance. Of the two Protestant théologians who have been men of philosophic genius, Calvin seems to have preferred to think of the deity chiefly as creator and ruler of the universe in time, and intimates that to pass beyond this in thought is to exceed the legitimate limits of human inquiry.³ But the greatest philosopher among Protestant religious teachers, Jonathan Edwards, gives us something very much like a Christian Neo-platonism in his doctrine of God and his doctrine of the good, and shows himself to be wholly dominated by perfectionist pre-suppositions. In his treatise *On the End in Creation* the old

³ *Institutes*, Book I, 14.

Platonic argument from God's self-sufficiency to his "otherness" and immutability reappears :

No notion of God's last end in creation is agreeable to reason which would truly imply or infer any indigence, insufficiency, and mutability in God; or any dependence of the Creator on the creature, for any part of his perfection or happiness. Because it is evident, by both Scripture and reason, that God is infinitely, eternally, unchangeably, and independently glorious and happy; that he stands in no need of, cannot be profited by, or receive anything from, the creature; or be truly hurt, or be the subject of any sufferings or impair of his glory and felicity, from any other being.

Finally, as regards the nature of blessedness, historic Protestantism has seldom attained to the subtlety of conceiving of this as literally transtemporal; but it has tended toward such a conception as its limit. The older evangelical thought found its object of religious aspiration, very certainly, in another world; and the difference between the two worlds consisted in the fact that existence here is essentially changeful, imperfect, striving, transitory, while existence there is an endless perfection and unaltering satisfaction, an eternal rest, free from passion, from hope, and from achievement, where the saints, becoming like God, are similarly, in their degree, superior to all real "indigence, insufficiency, and mutability." Even the less reflective forms of Protestant thought in the past would seemingly have answered in the affirmative Browning's question :

Is it true we are now and shall be hereafter,
But what and where depend on life's minute ?
Hails heavenly cheer or infernal laughter
Man's first step out of the gulf or in it ?
Shall man, such step within his endeavor,
Man's face, find no more play or action
But joy, that is crystallized forever,
Or grief, an eternal petrifaction ?

And even the extreme logic of perfectionism, and the idea of a supra-temporal good, remain still in evidence in comparatively popular theological writings. Thus Mr. Inge concludes his recent book on *Christian Mysticism* with such philosophical reflections as these :

The human spirit beats against the bars of space and time themselves and could never be satisfied with any earthly utopia. Our true home must

be in some higher sphere of existence, above the contradictions which make it impossible for us to believe that time and space are ultimate realities, and out of reach of the inevitable catastrophe which the next glacial age must bring upon the human race.

And a writer belonging to another and very modern school of religious thought repeats still more clearly the old and essentially Platonic argument that man's consciousness of imperfection logically implies the reality and the attainability of a completed perfection—of which the perfectness can be defined only as the negation of the characters of common experience, so that it is “non-” or “supra-” everything—supraspatial, supratemporal, suprapersonal.

We could have no sense of imperfection, or feeling of the brief and transitory character of visible things, if we had not in us a standard of perfection, if we did not share in an eternal life—an existence in which is no variableness nor shadow that is cast by turning. That we are thus conscious of the imperfection of our own lives implies not merely that our lives should be rooted in a perfect life, but that we should be personally conscious of this superpersonal perfection. . . . The facts of consciousness are not adequately expressed unless we say that we have experience of a real superpersonal perfection, whose appeal to us is . . . the motive and source of the effort to remove our personal imperfection.⁴

But if this be the “root of religion,” our best historic teachers in religion are, not even the pseudo-Dionysius or Plotinus or Plato, but rather Shankara or Gotama Buddha.

II.

Meantime—the observation is a fairly familiar one—the main current of distinctively modern reflection ever since the Renaissance has been characterized by an increasing rejection of otherworldliness, and of the implicit theory of worth, the ideal of abstract and formal perfection, or self-sufficiency, which had hitherto made otherworldliness of some sort or other inevitable. If the tendency of ancient thought, and of mediæval thought in so far as it was under Greek influences, was to conceive of good and reality in terms of pure form without content, the tendency of modern thought has been more and more to exalt richness of content at the expense of form. The worth of fulness and diversity

⁴ REV. S. H. MELLONE, in the *New World*, September, 1896, pp. 522, 523.

of spiritual experience for its own sake has received ever clearer recognition in the prevailing system of values. To the oriental thinker, and to some of the ancients, the more particulars and details there were in the universe, the less interesting did the universe appear; the modern thinker looks upon each new detail as adding to the interest of the whole, and has learned to reverence even the unrationaled and uncoordinated fact. Not the general and the abstract, but the concrete and particularized, constitutes the essence of those ideas of worth and of being that are becoming dominant. And this new appraisement of experience, this valuation of life for life's sake, necessarily means that the good lies, not in perfection, but in process; not in absoluteness, but in wealth of forthreaching relations; not in self-sufficiency, but in the play of the soul's life that can come only through the give-and-take of social fellowship and struggle and passion; not, finally, in changelessness, but in activity, the strenuous vigor of the will as it presses forward into the future. This change in the presuppositions which govern men's estimate of things is now very widely apparent. One of the symptoms of it is the species of sanctity which has come to attach to the word "human." Our literary moralists most in vogue write, not now upon "the vanity of human wishes," but upon the beauty and excellence of simply "being human." The supreme desirableness of man's situation in this world is felt to be that it is essentially a struggling imperfection, that it knows the "glory of the imperfect," as Professor Palmer's familiar phrase runs. The human, indeed, one may almost say, has become the ultimate category of worth; the divine, in the older theological sense of the term, as a self-contained and motionless perfection, is looked upon as something very like an inferior mode of being. Or rather, the idea of the divine is in course of being transformed. In this case, as normally in religious history, the conception of deity follows the lead of the conception of the ultimate good for man. Having learned—almost too thoroughly—to define the good in terms of activity and to define human personality in terms of its social relations, the religious spirit of our generation summons the personality to set its affections upon social and objective ends.

realizable under the conditions of time and space. The spiritual life is conceived to be something more than a closed circuit; the inner condition of the soul itself is recognized to be sane and excellent only when it consists in a resolute direction of the will toward the achievement, in an external and refractory world, of some good which has a social and collective significance—which possesses value for other and independent wills as well as for the agent's own. The real *religio*, the true piety of our time, is a piety toward the actual concrete relationships amid which a man finds himself. And as a generation's piety is, so will its God be also—though the relation has usually been read the other way about. A witty Calvinist, observing the signs of the times, has proposed a new version of the Shorter Catechism, in accordance with contemporary notions: "The chief end of God is to glorify man and enjoy him forever." The intended irony comes very near the truth; for the modern religious consciousness is tending toward the conviction that the "chief end of God" cannot, at all events, be an emptier or cheaper thing than the chief end of man; and that therefore God is to be thought of, not as an immutable and self-centered Unity over against the world, in whose beatific vision of his own perfections man may aspire to share, but rather as a supreme and archetypal Good Will, into the abounding fulness of whose forthgoing life man may enter simply by living whole-heartedly and generously and joyously in the world which he now and here knows.

All this change, however, did not come about at a stroke—if it can be said to have come about fully even yet. Three consecutive stages seem to be distinguishable through which the modern religious spirit, with its interest in the world of time, has been developed. The first of these stages is the deistic movement of the eighteenth century. That the characteristic tendencies of that century involved a perfectly self-conscious reaction against otherworldliness and mediaeval and semi-mediaeval ideals generally is sufficiently obvious. In its hostility to all mysticism and asceticism, in its optimistic desire to prove that this world is the abode of genuine worth, in its truly religious ardor for the reforming of society and the perfecting of

the species—in all this the Enlightenment presents the spectacle of an earnest endeavor to establish a “religion of this world.” But, in the form which it took, the endeavor was foredoomed to failure, for the reason simply that its theory of worth was in essence identical with that underlying the tendencies which it essayed to withstand. The philosophy of the Enlightenment did not, of course, follow out the idea of formal perfection to its profounder metaphysical and religious consequences; if it had, it would have completed the circle and fallen back into mysticism. But it proceeded throughout upon the assumption that, at least for society, the good means a condition of perfected and stationary equilibrium; it attempted to solve the problems of the universe by the methods of simplification and abstraction; and, above all, it knew of no conception whereby it could assign any rational meaning or ultimate value to the time-process. This is illustrated most clearly, of course, in the long controversy between the partisans of natural and of revealed religion. The position of the deists in that controversy rested upon the presupposition that any religious truth which is essential and necessary for salvation cannot be subject to development, cannot be historically mediated, but must be an unchanging possession of the human race at all times; and if unchanging, then, necessarily, very simple. The deist merely applied more rigorously the church’s criterion, the *quod semper et ab omnibus*; if changelessness and universality be the tests of truth in religion, then no revelation which came into the world at a particular moment of time and under particular historical conditions can be recognized as religiously fundamental. Christianity, so far as it is true, must be shown to be “as old as the creation;” that is to say, to contain no doctrine not within the reach of the common-sense of the most primitive and least sophisticated man. The same disregard of the conception of temporal development is to be seen again in the small place which that conception has in the arguments whereby the Enlightenment sought to justify its optimism. The theodicy of Leibniz, and still more that of Shaftesbury, was conceived wholly in terms of static perfection; it attempted to show that the universe as it stands

is an exquisitely ordered and harmonious unity, upon which the mind of the truly enlightened person will dwell in a frame of calm and disinterested æsthetic satisfaction. It was easy, however, for a Voltaire and a Hume later in the century to point out that, if such be the meaning of perfection, then "this place of wrath and tears" must be esteemed very far from perfect. And even the aspirations of the typical men of the century for social amelioration were marked—though in this case not without important exceptions—by the same lack of historical feeling, the same deficiency of any sense of the meaning of development or of the place which becoming has in the nature of things. Rousseau's preaching of the return to the state of nature is the classic example of this; such an ideal takes it for granted that in the historic process as such there is no worth at all. And even apart from Rousseau's influence, the political philosophy which produced the French Revolution was for the most part dominated by the supposition that, after a few relatively simple modifications of the social order, a really perfect and stable and lastingly satisfactory state of society could be reached, where each individual should live in simple contentment, enjoying the equipment of "rights" proper to every unit representing the abstract entity "man." The theory of worth which all these characteristic doctrines of the century exemplify was inherently incapable of affording a permanent basis for an optimistic "religion of this world." And, in point of fact, the Enlightenment type of thought eventually showed a tendency to break down into the sort of *Weltanschauung* to which it had at first appeared most opposed. It is a just remark of Dr. Lehmann's, in his excellent study of Schopenhauer, that, on the strictly logical side of his pessimism and mysticism, Schopenhauer's philosophy is to be regarded as one of the later products of the Enlightenment.

The second step in the progress of the new evaluation of this world of time was taken when European thought, by discovering the idea of a law of continuous and intelligible development inherent in nature and history, gained a canon whereby it could assign rationality and spiritual significance to the tem-

poral order of phenomena. In other words, this second step consisted in the removal of the first of those two preconceptions which we have seen to be the natural sources of otherworldliness—namely, the belief that the external, cosmical process contains no meaning and finality. The new *aperçu* received its first forcible expression in connection with the eighteenth century's special problem of the sources of religious knowledge. By his little manifesto, *Die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts*, Lessing, as is well known, rendered whole libraries of eighteenth-century theological controversy forever obsolete, by denying the tacit assumption in which both deist and churchman had agreed—the assumption that religious truth is a fixed mass of propositions, not originally gained, and not now to be enlarged, by man's progress in knowledge and moral experience. Such a denial took the wind out of the sails of the deist's neat and simple rationalism; but it did the same for the revelationist's arguments concerning the need for an unchanging religious authority. And ever since, in the degree that Lessing's conception of a progressive revelation through experience and history has penetrated the general consciousness, the whole aspect of religious discussion has been transformed. This, however, was a very partial application of the idea of development. The new insight was soon extended, as everyone now knows, by the influence of the philosophies of history, Hegelian and other, of which there was such an outpouring in the earlier Romantic period; and it eventually became the master-idea of the middle of the century, through the establishment of the biological doctrine of evolution. Meanwhile, man's control over natural forces through applied science had increased marvelously; and as the result of all this the entire face of the universe appeared metamorphosed before men's eyes. Man seemed to have learned to put his hand upon the inner mechanism of nature to direct it to his own rational ends; and he seemed to have found in nature itself a law of advancement from lower to higher. Consequently the world that moves in time took upon itself, to men's vision, a glowing coloring of hope and purposiveness, such as it had never worn before. And religion, the really

characteristic religion of the period, ceased to find the object of its aspiration and the stimulus of its zeal in a world beyond this ; it believed in, but it was not chiefly interested in, that other world. The social aims, the hopes of a collective terrestrial good, the vision of "the coming people," proved, and are proving, supremely absorbing to the moral imagination. A religion primarily "of this world" seemed, in the doctrine of development, to have at last found its justification. Such a religion, so justified, is at the present hour the burden of the gospel preached from scores of pulpits in the more liberal churches ; it is the main inspiration of much of the earnest and truly religious devotion to the service of society which exists both in and out of the churches.

And yet, if this religion of evolution is based upon an interest, not in the process itself, but in the goal toward which the process is tending—if it derives its force from its visions of a perfection in the future—then we shall have to say that it too rests upon shifting and unstable grounds ; that it cannot permanently justify itself before the religious consciousness. The end which it sets before the will is not such an end as can appear adequate and ultimately significant. There are three reasons for this. The first is the obvious fact that the doctrine of development does not, after all, remove that mysticism-breeding presupposition of the irrationality and purposelessness of the temporal process. The philosophy based upon the evolutionary principles of biology seems, in the last analysis, to lean to the side of the Oriental, and to give us something very like a doctrine of world-cycles. All our hot endeavors appear to avail nothing in the long run ; to the scientific imagination they are only moments in a vast eternal turmoil of alternate growth and decay. Science does not, it turns out, give us teleology as her last word ; it would appear that the secret of happiness in evolutionism lies in taking short views. And though, so long as things wag on comfortably, men may profess to be content with short views, it is not likely that they will forever be able to shut their eyes to the specter of that meaningless infinity of time ; and the whole history of religion shows that the appearance of

this specter is usually followed by a recurrence of otherworldliness and mysticism. It is very true that we need not take the man of science too seriously when he is found among the prophets, predicting the future of the earth and man ; but if we may refuse to be too greatly terrified by his vaticinations, we, at all events, cannot base any very definite optimism upon them. And, for the second point, if the worth of the evolutionary process be wholly derivative from the worth of its goal, that goal, if supposed attainable, must needs be an end capable of lastingly seeming interesting to the religious consciousness. But there are those among us who find no very great inspiration in the prospect of that remote terrestrial millennium which has Mr. Spencer for its prophet. Professor William James has had the sympathy of many readers when he has pointed out how inadequately that "tea-table Elysium" meets either the moral or religious needs of man. The ardent laborer in the service of society is likely to ask, sooner or later : "Does this self-complacent and commonplace, and withal transitory, contentment to be enjoyed by remote posterity, express the whole meaning and worth of my costly sacrifice and of my hard-bought virtue ?" To the young enthusiast will come the chilling question which came to the young Stuart Mill : "Conceive this end of my endeavor finally attained, does it, after all, so greatly stir me or appeal to me ?" And when this question comes, the enthusiast can escape pessimism only by doing as Mill did : by turning the eyes away from the distant goal and fixing them upon the simpler aims near at hand, upon the joys of the combat itself and the sense of human fellowship it brings. And, in the third place, such a goal, even if attainable, and if worth while, could not justify the slow temporal course whereby it was attained ; and it could, therefore, afford no basis for a theodicy. Present and past reality remain none the less alien and hostile to perfection because future reality is to become perfected. Unless, falling back upon the *ignava ratio*, we are to call it all an unintelligible mystery, some logical or moral necessity must be shown why the good could be reached only after so sad and wearisome a prelude. For this reason, again, the doctrine of

evolution could yield no grounds for an optimistic view of this world. There have appeared of late more than one ingenious and well-meaning theodicy based upon evolutionary principles ; but none of them seems to do more than illustrate afresh the difficulties inherent in the attempt to assign worth to individual and racial evolution solely by reason of the worth of its *terminus ad quem*.

But meanwhile, throughout the latter half of the present century, there has been increasingly coming to light, chiefly in poetry and untechnical reflective literature, what can only be called, in somewhat technical language, a new theory of worth ; and the essence of it, as we have already seen, is the belief that the good lies, not in perfection, not in the arrest of forthreaching process, but has its very essence in movement and process itself. And this means the denial, at last, of that second and deeper and so plausible presupposition which always, in so far as its influence has been felt, has led thoughtful men to turn from this their world in time to some more or less thoroughgoing ideal of quietude and immutability. When the older literary inspirations—the classicism, the immature romanticism, the amiable evolutionary humanitarianism—that stirred the earlier decades of the century were dying out in moral impotency, this new insight has bred a new literary movement, that neo-romanticism which is so conspicuous and so significant a development in our recent literature. And this insight represents the final and extreme point of modern divergence from both the classical and the mediæval fashions of evaluating life. An inherent paradox has at length been discovered to lurk in the conception of good ; it turns out that the good, which appears by its nature to be the end of the process of volition, is rather, in a deeper sense, a means to the reality and significance of the process whereby it is to be attained. The great and stirring game of existence must have its goals to aim at, and these goals must be invested with some seemingly independent value ; but the reason for being, the justifying worth of the whole, is, not that the goal should *have been* reached, but that the game, with all the activity of will and thought and feeling which it calls for, should be played.

And the worth of every such fixed goal, therefore, can only be derivative, secondary, and transitory. With this radical transformation of the conception of value, the entire Platonic and Aristotelian scheme of the universe—which, as we have seen, has in its broad outlines formed the logical framework of European moral and religious thought, even where men have been least aware of it—gets now completely inverted. The human life in time—involving as it does real imperfection and insufficiency and aspiration—is explicitly declared to be the essential type of the good; and therewith the fundamental grounds of otherworldliness are denied—not because of any necessary disbelief in immortality, but because it is seen that any life worth living, now or hereafter, cannot be truly “other” than this life, if otherness means timelessness or any perfection garnered once for all. In justifying the temporal world, the type of reflection of which I speak does not, like the eighteenth-century optimism, declare the world to be supremely beautiful and harmonious and satisfactory for the world is verily of no such sort. Nor does this new “religion of this world” gain its inspiration, like the evolutionary meliorism, from the anticipation of some final earthly millennium when all conscious life shall have become placidly adjusted to its environment; for upon no such anticipation, both poor and uncertain, can the soul of man be sufficiently fed. Life is conceived to find its justification only in the living; not because it is harmonious and beautiful, for it is that only imperfectly; not because it yields happiness and contentment, for it does that only in brief moments; but because it gives to free spirits the one chance worth having here or elsewhere, the chance for conscious and growing knowledge and activity and love, the chance to enter heartily into the day's work and know the joy of the working.

It is hardly necessary to point out in what writers of the century this conception of the nature of worth gets its literary manifestation. Carlyle—with his “gospel of work,” his glorification of the will, his interest in history as the record of the acts of personalities, his passion for the significant infinitesimal, for the small concrete things of history that carry with them some

poignant suggestion of the human spirit in action—may be looked upon as one of the early fathers of the new doctrine. Browning is, of course, the greatest and the most uncompromising and self-conscious of the preachers of it. “Perfection” is, it is hardly too much to say, the word which for him sums up all reproach; for perfection is the contradictory of what Browning, in his own peculiar sense, means by “love.” Again and again, in differing aspects, he reiterates the one teaching which he seems, through all his dramatic forms of utterance, to be chiefly desirous of impressing. So, for example, in a familiar passage of “Old Pictures in Florence” he contrasts the classical with what he takes to be the Renaissance ideals in art :

They are perfect—how else ? they shall never change :
We are faulty—why not ? we have time in store.
The Artificer's hand is not arrested
With us ; we are rough-hewn, nowise polished :
They stand for our copy, and, once invested,
With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.
"Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven —
The better ! What's come to perfection perishes.

In the poem called “Rephan” he tells the story of a soul native to a species of immutable and eternally perfect other-world, where are

No springs,
No winters throughout its space. Time brings
No hope, no fear : as today, shall be
Tomorrow : advance or retreat need we
At our stand-still through eternity?
All happy : needs must we so have been,
Since who could be otherwise ? All serene :
What dark was to banish, what light to screen ?

Of such a mode of being where all things are “merged alike in a neutral Best” this soul wearies :

I yearned for no sameness but difference
In thing and thing, that should shock my sense
With a want of worth in them all, and thence
Startle me up by an Infinite
Discovered above and below me—height
And depth alike to attract my flight,
Repel my descent ; by hate taught love.

And so at length the awakened spirit is ready to be translated to a better sphere, that of imperfection ; he hears the sentence of his release : "Thou art past, Rephan, thy place be Earth." Most strikingly of all does the same thought reappear in Browning's utterances concerning immortality. It is just because cumulative experience rather than perfection is the good, and because experience must necessarily be individual, that Browning's faith in the continuance of individual existence is so intense. But, as he insists in many often-quoted passages, the future life must be a *continuance* of that one endless process of expanding aspiration and love, not a transformation in kind, nor a cessation of all process.

"Strive and thrive!" cry "Speed," fight on, fare ever
There as here !

And the same insight determines the character of Browning's conception of God. He has traveled very far from that thought of God which dominates the great poem that so wonderfully expresses the mediæval view of the world ; to this interpreter of the modern spirit God is not the movelessness at the core of things, not the Peace "which quiets the center" of heaven (*Paradiso*, XXVII, 106-7, I, 121-2) in Dante's vision of the universe, but rather such a being as the dying Paracelsus learns at last to know :

I knew, I felt, what God is, what we are,
What life is— how God tastes an infinite joy
In infinite ways—one everlasting bliss,
From whom all being emanates, all power
Proceeds : in whom is life forevermore,
Yet whom existence in its lowest form
Includes ; where dwells enjoyment, there is he ;
With still a flying point of bliss remote.

And, to leave Browning, a younger generation of writers has taken up the same note ; all that is most vital and most characteristic in the more serious contemporary poetry is marked by this new faith in the supreme worth of aspiring imperfection, the great excellency of the life that strives in time, and by the utter rejection of the ideal of formal self-sufficiency, in man or God. Such men as J. A. Symonds and W. H. Henley and Kipling and Stevenson, whatever may be their several merits or deficiencies

as writers, have done much to save this generation from the pessimism, the spirit of decadence, and the dilettantism which a quarter of a century ago seemed so ominously threatening ; and they have been able to do so only because they have learned more or less adequately a new doctrine of worth which was the true and illuminating outcome of the experience and reflection of the modern world. Stevenson, in particular, has been a very clear-speaking and persuasive popularizer of that doctrine. This literary artist, solicitous about unconsidered trifles of diction and phrase, was at heart a moralist—ethics, as he confessed, was his “veiled mistress ;” and the main burden of his preaching was not easy to mistake. Not even Browning has set forth with fuller consciousness of its meaning the contrast between mediæval perfectionism and the modern spirit, than has Stevenson in the poem “Our Lady of the Snows,” addressed to the monks of the Chartreuse :

And you, my brothers, what if God
When from heaven's top he spies abroad
And sees on this tormented stage
The noble war of mankind rage,—
What if his vivifying eye,
O monks, should pass your corner by ?
For still the Lord is Lord of might,
In deeds, in deeds, he takes delight. . . .
Those he approves that ply the trade,
That rock the child, that wed the maid ;
That with weak virtues, weaker hands,
Sow gladness on the peopled lands,
And still with laughter, song and shout,
Spin the great wheel of earth about.
But ye !— O ye who linger still
Here in your fortress on the hill,
Our cheerful General on high
With careless look may pass you by.

Of the conception of worth which we have thus seen (perhaps too abundantly) illustrated it is easy to misinterpret the meaning in such a way as to seem to justify a new species of ethical and religious and æsthetic antinomianism, an essentially immoral view of things ; and this danger, which does not wholly

fail to show itself in certain aspects of Stevenson and Kipling and Browning, appears at its maximum in another poet who has done much to teach the same general view of life to this generation—Whitman. Since not form, but richness of content; not perfection, but width and depth of experience, defines the good, Whitman delights in a thoroughgoing formlessness in morals and in art. And, since his religion has so fully fixed itself upon this temporal world and found in the excellence of the world the ground of its piety, he feels himself prevented from passing moral or æsthetic condemnation upon anything. One thing is as good as another, and a bit better; there is no lawlessness of crime, no vileness of lubricity, no cheapness of vulgarity, which does not add to Whitman's almost mystical rapture at the spectacle of the world's seething movement and endless variety:

I am not the poet of goodness only; I do not disdain to be the poet of wickedness also.

Consequently all moral distinctions are as alien to the nature of the God of Whitman's worship as they are, for the opposite reason, to the God of certain forms of oriental mysticism; whether you say that the world of temporal movement is wholly good, with Whitman, or wholly bad, with the Oriental, in either case you can no longer admit any differences of worth among the parts of it.

Silent and amazed even when a little child,
I remember hearing the preacher put God into his statements
As contending against some being or influence!

But it ought to be obvious that this moral, or immoral, position of Whitman's is, in reality, inconsistent with itself and with the conception of worth which he means to set forth. The inconsistency lies in the fact that he attempts to justify temporal process in terms of sensation and feeling, of bare intensity of emotion regardless of the content or significance of the experiences which arouse that emotion. But for feeling merely, the good cannot be anything but contentment, quietude, and satisfaction; and from such a standpoint real process and struggle cannot be justified. This is most clearly evident from Whitman's

own attitude toward life. He is interested in the struggles, the restless effort and activity and conflict, of other people ; but for himself he prefers not to enter into the struggle, but to accept it as food for placid and benevolent emotion ; he prefers not to be active in the world's strenuous conflicts, but to look on and approve of both sides. In his own fashion he is as truly a contemplative as Thomas à Kempis, although the object which he contemplates is not the divine perfection, but the human turmoil ; and the self-contradictory nature of Whitman's thought is evident in the fact that, if all men were to adopt his distinctionless, all-approving, contemplative optimism, then the very conflict and aspiration which he wishes to contemplate would cease, the richness and variety of things would disappear with the disappearance of the distinctions between them. And a still deeper contradiction is apparent in the character of this optimism itself. What Whitman desired was to sympathize equally and impartially with all manifestations of human life, with the saint and the sinner, with the red slayer and the slain. But these men hate and oppose one another ; and one who professes to love both alike can really sympathize with neither. Since antipathies and dissatisfactions are essential elements in the temporal striving of the will, he who would sympathize ubiquitously and find satisfaction universally knows nothing of the true nature of that striving, is ignorant of the inner meaning of life. It is a consequence of this that to some readers of Whitman, at least, the pictures of innumerable disconnected scraps of sensation in beast and man which he jumbles together and calls poetry, seem to illustrate, not the wealth and fulness, but the emptiness of life. For, though the different aspects of experience which he presents bear differing names, they amount always to one and the same thing, so far as the attitude of the poet toward them is concerned ; each arouses the same vague, unvarying, and wholly superficial rapture, until the reader finds in Whitman's very different world the fault that made insipid the perfection of Browning's star Rephan, and

Yearns for not sameness but difference
In thing and thing.

It is evident, then, that the temporal world can be called good only if worth be defined in terms, not of emotion, but of will; only if the joy which justifies life be the joy of purposeful action, the satisfaction which the self-conscious reason knows in its own dissatisfaction. The ideal toward which the modern theory of worth really tends, then, is not a wallowing in unorganized emotions, but the strenuous tension of the will, with the enjoyment of the very particular sort of vital feelings that go with such a tension. And in order to make these latter feelings possible at all, the *objective* ends of action must be looked upon as fixed and serious and significant—they cannot be a thing to play fast and loose with. The will must have its partial perfections to look forward to, its relative imperfections to hate, its provisional forms to shape its experience by; else the activity itself would cease to be real activity. And for any individual, the ends he is to seek, the rules of the game he is to play, are not altogether of his own choosing; they are settled for him by the circumstances in which his existence is cast, and especially by the social relations that define his place in the human world. But in all this there is nothing which compels us to admit that the game exists merely for the sake of the rules, or the activity merely for the worth of the ends which it accomplishes. By defining the process as the good we can see why fixed ends are necessary, and at the same time why they are not after all ends-in-themselves.

The consenting witnesses to this view which I have adduced have been chiefly poets and unphilosophical moralists; but it is a thing by no means rare in history for the philosophic interpretation and coherent formulation of a new insight to be the last instead of the first stage in its development. We are not, however, left to poetical feeling nor to our individual diversities of ethical taste, in deciding whether or not we should give to the time-process a central place both in our theory of worth and our theory of reality. There are two very good doctrinal reasons, the one of a religious, the other of a metaphysical character, which are as conclusive of the matter as they are simple; and these ought now to be briefly indicated. In the first place, as

has already been suggested, unless we recognize process rather than perfection to be the good, the problem of evil remains for ever incapable of any religiously satisfactory solution. For if, to use the old-fashioned phrase of Edwards, the "end in creation" be the attainment of any sort of stationary perfection, no philosophical necessity can be shown why the creation should first have been dragged through so long and tortuous a path of sin and misery and imperfection. The *de facto* existence of evil can be explained only by some sort of dualism, as Mill long ago pointed out—unless we are prepared to revise our conception of worth. The futility of many of the older palliative "solutions" of the problem has been sufficiently pointed out not long since by Professor Royce, in the article on "The Problem of Job" in his *Studies of Good and Evil*; and Professor Royce's own fashion of dealing with the ancient problem, though not at all palliative, is certainly no more satisfactory. His new *consolatio philosophiae* would discover in the doctrines of idealistic monism a higher synthesis where evil turns out to be good after all. Human life, no doubt, *is* miserable and sinful; and there is no reason to suppose it will ever grow less so. But all this mass of finite experience forms an integral part of the experience of the Absolute; and the absolute experience is wholly perfect and satisfied and triumphant, wholly what the Absolute Will eternally would have it to be. This, however, signifies in plain language that human imperfection is willed by God, not because struggling imperfection is for the finite creature itself a nobler condition, but because the divine perfection is the more enhanced thereby; it signifies that finite wretchedness and evil are served up as ingredients in the titillating zest of the divine enjoyment. Surely in so triumphant a synthesis the conventional distinction between the deity and the devil seems also to have disappeared. Philosophically inevitable such a conception might be; but it is hardly likely to be religiously consoling to anyone who understands it. Professor Royce's article is none the less a profound and significant contribution to the subject; and the singularity of its outcome is due to the author's attempt to do justice to two incompatible logical motives, that concern both

the theory of worth and metaphysics. The main problem of all the post-Hegelian idealism of which Professor Royce's system is the most subtly reasoned and highly elaborated example, has been to reconcile these two motives. On the one hand, the idealist must be loyal to the fundamental Hegelian notion of the "concrete" universal; some sort of genuine reality and worth must be assigned to the concrete world of related and imperfect experiences. But, on the other hand, the Absolute must be truly absolute and perfect, a timeless and self-sufficient *totum simul* of experience. The former element in the doctrine shows where it has learned from the course of modern reflection; the latter shows the continued survival of the "perfectionist" presuppositions of ancient metaphysics. But either element is bound to be fatal to the other; the absoluteness of the Absolute cannot consist with its concreteness. The religious insufficiency of this combination of warring categories has just been briefly pointed out; it remains to try to indicate no less briefly the main reason for holding it to be metaphysically impossible.

Such a doctrine as that of Professor Royce is the latest, as it is one of the most vigorous and ingenious, in a long series of attempts to make the coexistence of a temporal world and a supratemporal ultimate reality conceivable. We have seen how unsuccessful in this attempt were Platonism and the essentially Platonic theology of the mediæval church. If the most modern and most promising endeavor of the same sort fails, it is a fair presumption that the philosophy of religion is embarked on a hopeless enterprise when it essays to get rid of the notion of temporal process, even in its conception of the being of God. Now, the absolute idealist recognizes that the world of experience in time is no illusion, nor, in the equivocating language of the Neoplatonist and the schoolmen, explicable as mere negation or privation of the divine perfection. The only way, then, in which its reality can be reconciled with the achieved and motionless perfection of God is by conceiving it as embraced within the Absolute Experience. No jot or tittle of it must be uncontained within that universal whole; else the Absolute were no Absolute. We are called upon, then, to conceive of all the content of a

temporal world as possessed in an experience which is not temporal, but an all-beholding eternally changeless moment, wherein the future is no less present than the past. To such a metaphysics one can answer only, but sufficiently, by saying that it can be true only if a contradiction in terms can be true. For the temporality of time can never be contained in the non-temporal. It is perfectly conceivable that all of the temporal relations of things should be translated into some form of coexistence, into some spatial or purely logical analogue. But the translation would never be the same as the original ; and the original would always remain an outlying, unincluded aspect of reality, not to be disposed of, unless by a reversion to the discarded oriental device of crying out "illusion" before the concrete realities of the actual world. To put the matter less abstractly, those experiences, feelings, attitudes of will, which are dependent upon the temporal conditions of human life for their distinctive character—the experiences of anticipation, of uncertainty, of hesitant hope, and of disappointment—could never be shared, without a transformation of their original emotional values, by an Absolute Being who at the same time saw beyond the uncertainty and knew the disappointment as eternally predestinated by the nature of things. No dialectical subtlety can ever finally put out of sight the fundamental dilemma ; either the reality of the non-temporal and perfect must be sacrificed, in our conception of God and of his world, in favor of the reality of the temporal and not-perfected, or else the reality of the not-perfected and temporal must be sacrificed to the other. Between the oriental doctrine, which rejects wholly this world, declaring it completely evil in point of worth, and completely illusory in point of reality, and the newer doctrine, which declares that a world of diversity and of becoming is the only conceivable type of reality or of worth—between these two we shall eventually be compelled to choose. Ancient occidental thought, accepting the presuppositions underlying the former doctrine, could only evade some of its consequences by inconsistency; our modern thought has tended more and more to bring into question those presuppositions themselves. If the philosophical theology of the future is

to be of any profit, it must take this sharply defined dilemma for its very starting-point. If it does so, it will be forced to deal honestly and soberly with the time-notion; and when this is done, we may have good hope of reaching a religious view of the world which shall at last give us a full and consistent and coherent interpretation of what the modern spirit has been slowly learning about the nature of the real and of the good.